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CASTRO'S ISLAND-AN INSIDE LOOK

Food For Cubans—Hate

How does Castro survive in a hostile hemisphere?
Famed reporter Bob Considine revisited Castroland after a five-year absence and provides a fresh perspective in this second article on a froubled and troublesome land.

By BOB CONSIDINE

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To sustain the will of the Cuban people and make them forget the loss of their voice in the running of affairs, their shabby clothes and the burdens of queuing up for almost everything that holds body and soul together, Castro has given them nourishing enemies to hate.

The United States, of course, is the Number One bete noir. Constant repetition has persuaded many former admirers of the United States that it must be true that all their troubles can be traced to Washington.

Did not Washington order the blockade? Did not Washington whip the Organization of American States into its strong attack on the regime? Does not Washington send the CIA saboteurs? Who but Washington maintains the reactionary commanders of Guantanamo? And is it not true that only Washington sends the U-2 spy planes overhead?

So much for government by slogan, law by catch phrase. Castro keeps two sets of books. The second ledger contains evidence of the desperate game he plays daily to offset the determination of the United States to pull off from his remaining friends in the hemisphere and strangle his economy.

Russia may not actually be pressing a million dollars a day on Castro, but if it is giving him half of that amount, then that is a considerable boon and source of relief. Castro's bartering and begging have brought the ships of many lands to his shores filled with the basic needs of the Island's life.

Allied Good Will Blocks Stoppage

The United States Navy is not going to stop that trade. President Johnson is not going to alienate the affections of already tremulous allies in NATO and elsewhere by attempting to forbid England to sell its buses to Castro, Canada its surplus wheat, Japan its trucks and machinery, West Germany its chemicals and France its surprising range of products.

The 15 to 4 OAS vote approved for Release 2005/01/12 : CIA-RDP88-01315R000400130054-8

proved mandatory diplomatic and economic sanctions against Cuba. But just how mandatory they will be remains dubious. Mexico, one of the four who voted, against the majority, has no intentions whatsoever of breaking its ties with Cuba at the request of the United States.

Uruguay has profited from Castro's increased interest in cattle raising which the bearded dictator believes will provide more food for Cuba and install on the Island a "second crop" which would absorb the impact of any future failure of the mainstay sugar crop.

Chile, the third holdout, is as remote from Cuba as Mars, and probably took a position against the majority because of the strong left wing elements now building up apace for the September elections. Bolivia, the fourth holdout, does not matter one way or the other.

Castro in No Mood To Add Annoyances

With all these bones, Castro's assertion last week

that he could do without any U.S. aid for 20 years would seem reasonably valid. However, he is in no mood obviously to further annoy the colossus to the north.

Woven into some of the more inflammatory passages of his 3-hour 25-minute declaration in Santiago on July 26, and the 3-hour press conference the following day in Santiago was a series of tricky if's maybe's and but's. The quarter-million disciples of the bearded prophet who cheered Sunday when he laid verbal waste to Guantanamo either did not hear or did not care that he said in effect "if they shoot first."

It also was noted that he absolved the Johnson Administration of ordering the recent killing of one and the shooting of two other militiamen near Guantanamo, and he said this was surely the unilateral act of the base commander.

One has to search, however, for the felicitous phrase.

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